

Please amend the above-identified patent application, without prejudice, as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS:

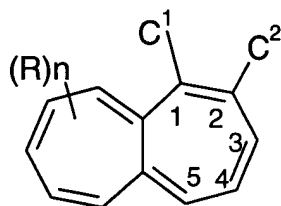
Cancel claim 16.

Amend claims 17-19, 23 and 24 as follows:

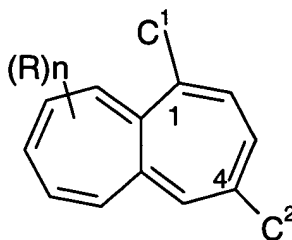
17. (Amended) [4n]-heptalenes according to claim 26, whereby, C^1 and C^2 represent independently from each other a hydrogen atom, a methyl group, a phenyl group, an ethyl ester group, a methyl ester group, a (E)-PhCH=CH-group, a (E)-4-MeOC₆H₄CH=CH-group, a (E)-4-ClC₆H₄CH=CH-group, a 4-MeOC₆H₄-group, a -CH=CH-CH=CH-C₆H₅ group, a -CH=CH-C₆H₄NO₂-4 group, a -CH=CH-C₆H₄OMe-4 group, with the proviso that a heptalene being substituted by a methyl ester group at the position 1, a -CH=CH-CH=CH-C₆H₅ group at the positions 2 and 5, an isopropyl group at the position 7 and a methyl group at the position 10 is excluded.

18. (Amended) [4n]-heptalenes according to claim 26, whereby said further substituents R are selected from the group comprising substituted or unsubstituted C₁-C₁₂-alkyl groups or photoactive diazo-containing groups, like azobenzene.

19. (Amended 2x) Method for the preparation of substituted heptalenes of the formula (I) or (II), according to claim 26



(I)



(II)

whereby C^1 , C^2 , R and n are as above defined, comprising the steps of

(a) obtaining a heptalene-dicarboxylate by a reaction

of a correspondingly substituted azulene with acetylenedicarboxylate, and optionally

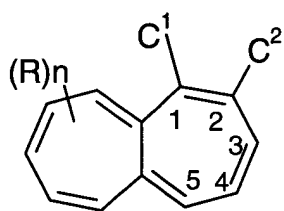
(b) transforming at least one carboxylic group or another substituent that was entered by the preliminary Diels-Alder reaction into the desired conjugated substituent having an extended π -electron system.

23. (Amended) An optical storage device comprising at least one substituted [4n]-annulene according to claim 26.

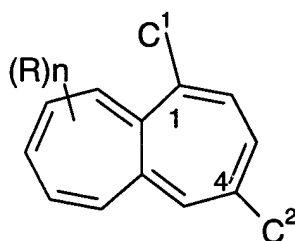
24. (Amended) A non-linear optical device comprising at least one substituted [4n]-annulene according to claim 26.

Insert new claims 26 and 27 as follows:

26. (new) Substituted [4n]-heptalenes of the general formula (I) or (II) being optically and/or thermally switchable, based on thermal or photochemical double-bond shifts (DBS),



(I)



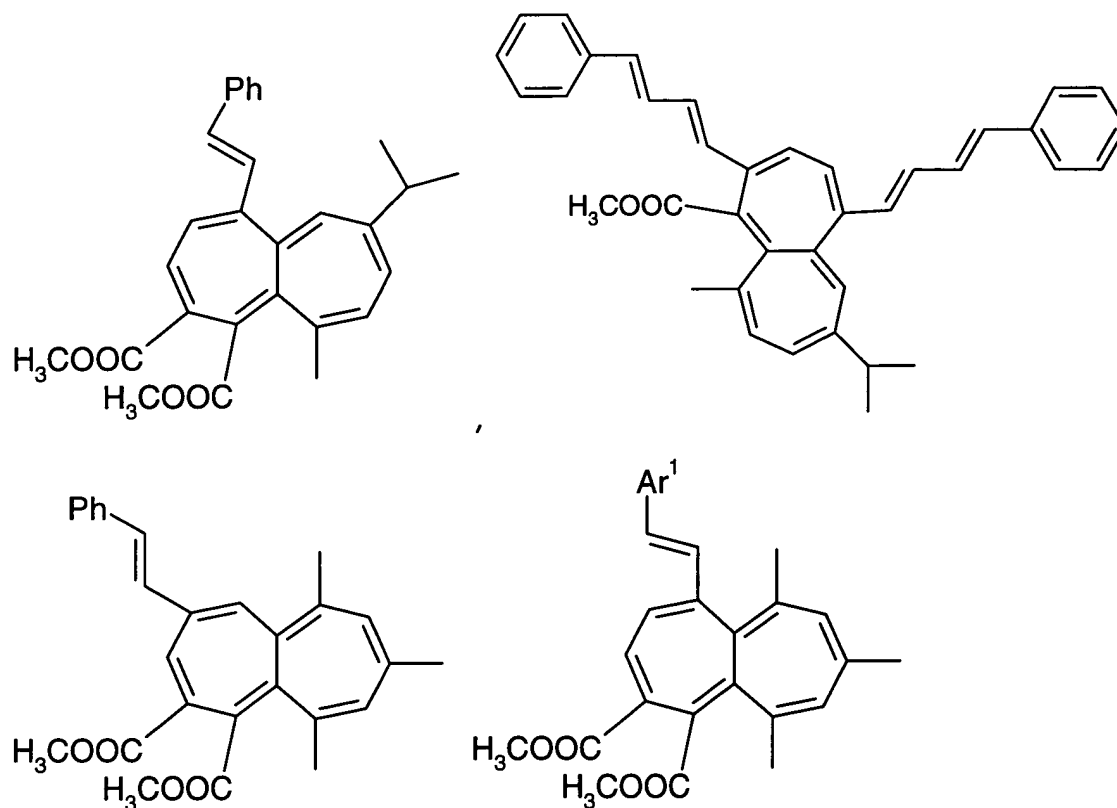
(II)

whereby C^1 and C^2 represent independently from each other a hydrogen atom, a substituted or unsubstituted C_1 - C_{12} -alkyl group, a substituted or unsubstituted C_1 - C_{12} -alkoxy group, a substituted or unsubstituted aryl- C_1 - C_{12} -alkyl group, a substituted or unsubstituted C_1 - C_{12} -alkenyl group, a substituted or unsubstituted C_1 - C_{12} -conjugated alkenyl group, a substituted or unsubstituted C_1 - C_{12} -alkinyl group, a substituted or an unsubstituted phenyl group, a substituted or an unsubstituted heterocyclic group, a cyano group, a nitro group, a thiocyanate group, a C_1 - C_{12} -ester group being optionally polymerisable with copolymers, with the proviso that at least one of said substituents C^1 and C^2 contains an extended conjugated π -electron system which is in conjugation with the π -electron system of the heptalene core, and

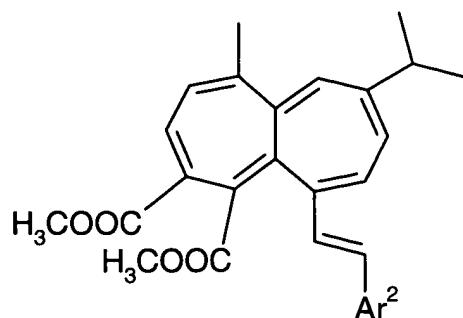
whereby said [4n]-heptalenes can comprise at least one further substituent R being selected from the above indicated groups with n being 0-8,

provided that if one of the at least one further substituents R is an isopropyl group at the position 9 of the heptalene ring, the substituent at the position 6 must not be a methyl group, and

with the proviso that heptalenes having the following substituents including their valence isomers are excluded:



wherein Ar¹ is phenyl, 4-chloro phenyl or 4-methoxy phenyl, and



,wherein Ar² is phenyl or 4-methoxy phenyl.

27. (new) Substituted $[4n]$ -annulenes according to claim 16, wherein at least one of the groups C^1 , C^2 or R is a group $-\text{COO}-(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{OH}$, a group $-\text{COO}-(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{OOC}-\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)=\text{CH}_2$ or a group $-\text{COO}-(\text{CH}_2)_nC_6H_4-4-\text{CH}=\text{CH}_2$ wherein $n \geq 2$.